REMARKS

Applicants' undersigned counsel thanks Examiner Ward for her continued careful and thorough examination of the present application. The undersigned also thanks the Examiner for the very helpful and courteous telephone interview that was conducted on July 10, 2007. During that interview, the amended claims as presented herein were discussed in view of the rejections contained in the last Office action.

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly set forth the order of certain steps, and also for clarity. Claim 6 has also been amended for clarity. Matter previously presented in 'preferably' clauses in claim 8 has been canceled from that claim, and relocated to new dependent claims 20 and 21. Claim 2 has been amended to correct a minor error as noted by the Examiner. New claim 22 has been added, depending from claim 1, to specify additional features supported by the application. Claim 7 has been rewritten as an independent claim, retaining the step of holding the first substrate in a tilted position with respect to the second substrate while moving them toward each other. No new matter has been entered.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph. Claim 2 has been amended as suggested by the Examiner to overcome the rejection.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being obvious over three different reference combinations: Perego in view of Katsufumi; Noriaki in view of Shizuki et al. or Kano; and Eichlseder (DE 100 08 111) in view of Shizuki et al. or Kano. Each of these rejections was discussed during the above-mentioned telephone interview. In view of the amendments to claim 1 contained herein, the Examiner kindly agreed that the claim now appears to overcome the rejections of record.

Claim 7 has been rejected over the same three combinations of references applied against claim 1. Claim 7 recites, *inter alia*, that the first substrate is held in a tilted position with respect to the second substrate while being moved toward it to establish an area of contact, which is thereby initially "restricted to a predefined sector of an annulus adjacent the outer edges of the first bonding surface and the second bonding surface." This feature was present in claim 7 previously pending, and has been retained in current claim 7, which has been rewritten as an independent claim. This feature is nowhere disclosed or suggested in any of the cited references. Accordingly, it was also agreed during the interview that the rejections of claim 7 appear to be overcome.

In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims, it was agreed during the interview that the pending art-based rejections appeared to be overcome. Accordingly, the application is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

During the interview, the Examiner indicated that the claim amendments herein could not be entered after-final because they would require a further search. Accordingly, the Examiner suggested filing the same with an RCE. This Amendment is being so-filed, and early and favorable consideration is requested.

If Examiner Ward should have any additional comments or suggestions, or for any reason to advance the prosecution hereof, she is invited and requested to please contact the undersigned at the phone number provided below.

If there are any additional fees required by this communication, please charge any such fees to our Deposit Account 16-0820, Order No. 36076US1.

Respectfully submitted,

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